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Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

5073rd meeting

Tuesday, 9 November 2004, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Danforth	(United States of America)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Cheng Jingye
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Germany	Mr. Von Ungern-Sternberg
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Spain	Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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04-59823 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Guéhenno to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. I now give the floor to Mr. Guéhenno.

Mr. Guéhenno: As members of the Council may recall, a briefing on the conduct of the 9 October presidential ballot was provided three days after the event (see S/PV.5055). I should like to take this opportunity to update the Council about the subsequent process that led to the certification of the official electoral results on 3 November by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), which declared Hâmid Karzai as Afghanistan's first elected President. I would also like to share with members the key challenges that the Afghan leadership will need to address, with the support of the international community, over the next 180 days or so.

Members will also recall that, on the day of the elections, a number of opposition candidates made allegations regarding the fairness of the electoral process, including complaints about the use of indelible ink to mark voters' thumbs and undue influence exerted on voters by polling staff and candidate representatives. A three-member impartial panel of international electoral experts, established on 11 October, examined complaints lodged by presidential candidates and conducted an extensive investigation that included consultations with the candidates themselves, with observer and with electoral support teams and electoral staff. The panel's report, submitted to the Joint Electoral Management Body and made public on 2 November, found that irregularities observed did not materially affect the overall outcome of the election. Two days later, candidates Qanooni, Mohaqeq and Dostum — who had been most critical of the ballot process — publicly announced their acceptance of the electoral results.

In all, some 8,128,940 ballots were cast, representing 70 per cent of the registered voters, of whom 40 per cent were women. After considering the results of the counting, the report of the impartial panel and the work of their own complaints and investigations mechanism, the JEMB declared that Hâmid Karzai had secured an outright majority of 55.4 per cent of the vote. Yonous Qanooni obtained 16.3 per cent of the vote, Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq 11.6 per cent and Abdul Rashid Dostum 10 per cent. All of the remaining 14 candidates individually received less than 2 per cent of the vote; collectively, they received 6 per cent. The Constitution calls for the inauguration of the President-elect to take place 30 days after the announcement of the official ballot result.

The publication of the final results allows us to put forward an initial analysis of the vote. Overall, ethnic considerations appear to have played an important role in determining people's votes. Electoral support for the four main contenders, President Karzai, Mr. Qanooni, Mr. Dostum and Mr. Mohaqeq, strongly correlated with the areas where Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras are respectively the majority groups. Among refugees in Iran, President Karzai and

Mr. Mohaqeq split the vote, each receiving approximately 40 per cent. In Pakistan, 80 per cent voted for President Hâmid Karzai. That pattern confirms one of the features of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, namely, the assertion of ethnic identities.

While ethnic considerations had an impact in rural areas, President Karzai and other candidates received multi-ethnic support in major cities. That may be attributable to the fact that, since ethnic identity was not exploited aggressively during the campaign, candidates were able to operate widely outside their core constituencies. As a result, all candidates received votes in all provinces of the country. More importantly, beyond ethnicity, Afghans showed that they are united in their rejection of violence, their support for a peaceful political process and the affirmation of their right to participate in it.

Attention has now shifted to the post-election political phase, including the immediate task of forming the next Government and the challenges of parliamentary and local elections. The new President has an opportunity to select an effective and competent cabinet able to deliver the basic services expected from the Government. He will also certainly take into account the need for the cabinet to be representative of the ethnic, cultural and geographical diversity of the country. Competence and representation are therefore key to providing a strong political platform that will enable the President to address the challenges that Afghanistan will face. As to the priorities of the next Government, President Karzai has already indicated that security will be the most important issue, especially the further disarmament of private military forces.

Security, indeed, remains a significant concern. A suicide bombing carried out in the centre of Kabul on 23 October, in which two people lost their lives, may have signalled the end of the period of relative calm that prevailed during the election. Regrettably, a few days later, on 28 October, Annetta Flanigan, Shqipe Hebibi and Angelito Nayan — all three of them electoral staff — were abducted in the Kart-e-Parwan district of Kabul in broad daylight.

The Government of Afghanistan is leading the investigation into that incident. It is being assisted by a team from the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator and specialists offered by other Governments. Cooperation between the different national and international actors is ensured through a number of groups working around the clock on all aspects of the case. Securing their safe return is of paramount concern. For that reason, we hope that the Council will understand that we are unable to share information that might compromise the ongoing process or put our three colleagues at greater risk, and we would ask that Member States minimize public statements on that matter for the same reason. In the meantime, a number of special measures have been taken by the United Nations to enhance staff safety at a time of possible increased exposure to risks. They are the most stringent staff security measures to be put in place in Kabul since 2001.

As the Council will recall, last July the JEMB decided that parliamentary, provincial and district elections should be held separately from the presidential election, and not later than the next Afghan month of Saur — from 20 April to 20 May 2005. As we embark on this phase of the electoral process, a number of technical requirements and environmental conditions must be carefully considered. In carrying out this complex planning exercise, the reports issued by the various observation and electoral support missions in Afghanistan during the presidential election, including those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and other national and international organizations and groups will be of invaluable assistance.

Furthermore, in the last few weeks, proposals have been made to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) by the different components of the electoral operations, in particular the JEMB and its secretariat, as well as national security agencies and international military forces. Those proposals take into account the experience gained during the presidential elections in all key areas — institutions, legal procedures, operations and security — and suggest best practices and lessons that can now be implemented. Those reports will be crucial in assessing various solutions for the implementation of the next elections and in exploring different technical and operational alternatives. UNAMA has been discussing key issues related to electoral preparations with security and diplomatic partners in Kabul.

In some ways, the successful conduct of the presidential election may result in an unrealistic expectation that elections in Afghanistan will not be difficult. It would be a mistake, however, to become too complacent. Parliamentary elections will be much more complicated and fraught with security concerns than the presidential elections.

I would like to mention five essential issues, in particular, that must be resolved in order to hold parliamentary and local elections within the time frame prescribed by the electoral law. First, boundaries of districts — and in some cases, provinces — must be officially delimited. Secondly, population figures must be agreed upon for the assignment of parliamentary seats. Thirdly, the voters' list must be analysed, refined, and in some cases updated, in order to prepare specific voter lists for each polling station. Fourthly, a complaints mechanism and electoral offence prosecution system must be developed at the local level. And fifthly, the qualifications of thousands of potential candidates must be vetted prior to their registration. Implementing some of those requirements — for example, providing for more time to vet candidates — may require a revision of the electoral law.

Other measures that have been strongly recommended by most observers' reports include the need to develop a vigorous capacity-building programme for domestic observers and party agents, the need to strengthen and extend civic education activities to enable voters to understand the greater complexity of parliamentary and local elections, and the need to review the structure of the electoral authority and other operational modalities to conduct these elections.

Separating the presidential and parliamentary elections provided additional time to improve the environment for the conduct of parliamentary and local elections. These elections will inevitably be more affected by local tensions and be more susceptible to fraud and intimidation than were the presidential elections. For that reason, the influence of local commanders, the widespread and tangled web of narcotics and arms and the absence of an efficient local civil administration continue to constitute serious obstacles to holding legitimate parliamentary and local elections.

A key factor in improving the local security environment will be the ability of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme to capitalize on the political momentum generated by the electoral process. As previously reported, in the few weeks before the presidential election, more than 5,000 men went through the DDR process, bringing the total for the programme in one year of operations to almost 22,000 disarmed ex-combatants. The heavy weapons cantonment programme has also gained considerable momentum since September. Approximately 75 per cent of all operational and repairable weapons are now in cantonment sites.

The current Afghan Government wants to accelerate the disarmament and reintegration of those remaining militia forces that are administratively linked to the Ministry of Defence so that the process is completed by the beginning of the Afghan new year, 21 March 2005.

Reintegration activities will, of course, continue further until mid-2006. Closer collaboration between the Ministries of Defence and Finance should allow for better monitoring of Government resources allocated to militia forces, including the timely suspension of payments once units are decommissioned. The initiative to link political party registration to full disarmament, which began in July, has also yielded positive benefits. It has been agreed to modify the schedule of disarmament in order to enable three of the main political groups — Jamiat, Junbesh and Da'wat — to divest themselves of their military wings and to be registered in time for the parliamentary and local elections. The leaders of those parties have agreed to use their political authority to assist in the full decommissioning of their former units.

While that progress is encouraging, constant and focused attention is still required by the new Government and the international community if DDR is to improve the environment in which parliamentary and local elections must take place. The issue of irregular militias is also rapidly emerging as a problem which needs to be tackled in advance of the next round of elections. These are armed groups that are not on the payroll of the Ministry of Defence and are therefore not included in the current DDR programme. They are, however, equally and perhaps even more destabilizing for the security of many areas of Afghanistan than the regular militias. Discussions are ongoing in Kabul, under the leadership of the Government, to examine

ways to dismantle those groups through weapons collection and community development programmes.

Another factor contributing to local insecurity is the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. The narcotics trade, with its scale and corrupting influence, poses a growing threat to the State-building process and risks becoming a major impediment to holding credible parliamentary and local elections. Much greater efforts must be made to address all aspects of that problem.

Last but not least, the expansion of the formal security apparatus will obviously be key to the success of parliamentary and local elections. One of the most successful aspects of the presidential round was that adequate security conditions were by and large maintained. That was achieved thanks to a comprehensive and coordinated operation involving the national army and police working with International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and coalition forces. That effort must be pursued and intensified ahead of parliamentary and local elections. In particular, the deployment of Afghan professional police is a sine qua non for safe district elections. No other force has the reach needed to secure close to 400 district elections in which tensions brought about by the electoral competition may be the rule rather than the exception.

However, while domestic security forces will necessarily be called upon to play a major role, international forces remain indispensable both in the direct provision of security and in backing up national efforts. In that respect, we encourage States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to enable ISAF to deploy forces — early and in adequate numbers — to areas included in stage 2 of its expansion, namely, the western provinces of Afghanistan.

In summary, technical and operational requirements and the need to create a more conducive environment pose formidable challenges to the planning process for parliamentary and local elections in Afghanistan. UNAMA has initiated a process of consultations with all relevant interlocutors, including political parties, in order to formulate adequate recommendations to the Government of Afghanistan and the international community as soon as possible. We hope that the consultations will be concluded by mid-November, at which point we will be in a position to identify financial requirements relating to the parliamentary elections.

(*spoke in French*)

The presidential election has demonstrated that Afghans have a strong national denominator in their common embrace of the democratic process, irrespective of ethnic origin or political affiliation. That momentous development is one of the most encouraging features of Afghanistan today, against a backdrop of continued challenges to the process posed by narcotics, extremism and factionalism. However, on the basis of initial consultations carried out by UNAMA in the various regions, it would seem that the overwhelming majority of Afghans are ready, together with their political leaders, to embark on the next stage of the electoral process, which should result in the creation of representative institutions at the local and national levels.

The international community may be tempted to diminish its attention to Afghanistan in the aftermath of the presidential election. It should resist that temptation, for while Afghans have shown remarkable political maturity, they must still be able to count on the full backing — economic, financial, political and military — of the international community in the new phase of local and legislative elections under way. It will be a difficult phase, but it can be successfully undertaken with the commitment of the Afghans and the international community.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.